

JUNE 20, 1985

The Shortgrass Country is having a big wet spell. In the past three or four weeks dark soggy thunderclouds have kept the residents busy dumping their rain gauges. We've had over four inches at the ranch. Only a short distance West of us one outfit had 12 inches in one period.

We use a double standard to measure the rain. At the house and on public roads, we have the popular open bore glass tube that'll capture everything from pollen in the air to minute dust particles. These glasses are for competition readings to spread over the phone and around the coffee houses. To take any kind of lead and hold it in weather reporting, these are by far the most helpful containers.

For the out-of-the-way gauges we put up the long cone-shaped type that have a black cover on the rim. Bars on the glass are calibrated in 1/100ths of an inch. Unless a drop of rain is round on the bottom it may splash off to the side. Hard blowing rains can be discounted as much as 15 or 20 percent. But I prefer using these more conservative devices as I get so carried away after a shower that I might rush off to town and buy some old cows before I realize that 3/10ths of an inch isn't enough rain to heal up 48 months of dry weather.

Another safeguard that I'm using is taking samples from all our gauges to test the moisture content of the rainfall. After a drouth as severe as the past one, the atmosphere and the ground have become so parched that it takes a high water content drop to overcome the dryness of the dust in the air and the general dehydration of the barns, corrals, saddles and other objects.

Though we lost about everything else during the drouth, the neighborhood sure didn't decline in creativity in weather reporting. I personally drove through some light showers that were being sent out over the radio as floods that'd swamp old Noah's Ark.

After one big half-incher that fell to the west of us, I expected to hear of a new waterfall opening for the summer tourist season. By the time those herders had driven in to town for their mail that particular shower showed more promise than anything that had flooded the Mississippi Delta in the past 50 years.

Lambs and calves are making good gains on the green grass. Cattle going to water often break and run to signal the prosperity of the times. What a relief it is to have some grass. Spring is going to last until August. I can't wait to see a few head run across the scales.